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THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS.

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III.

In our two previous papers we considered the historical problem of the self-consciousness of Jesus under its two complementary aspects, viz: (1) historical,—in relation to the sources; (2) scientific,—in relation to the mind's knowledge. In our first paper we found in the progress of the consideration that the problem sought the unity of the life underneath the forms of representation, and that in this search the work of criticism was incidentally involved. In our second paper we considered what the nature of that investigation must be if the demands of science were to be satisfied.

When we turn to the practical bearings of the problem, we see that on the religious, or so-called practical, as well as on the philosophical side of Christianity, the problem is fundamental.

4. *Bearing of the Problem on Christianity—(a) as Life; (b) as Doctrine.*

Christianity is the religion of its founder. It originated on the assumption and with the conviction that Jesus was the Christ. It is, therefore, the religion of Jesus as the Christ—not the religion of Jesus merely, as the phrase is often used, not the religion of the Christ as an ideal personality embodying certain ideal conceptions, but the religion of Jesus as the Christ. Christianity has been stated by some to be a life, by others to be a doctrine. But whether it be preëminently life, or preëminently doctrine, or whether it be preëminently both, essentially doctrine because essentially life, and doctrine in so far as it is life, however it be defined, it is essentially related to the person of its founder, having, indeed, its origin in the self-consciousness of Jesus, and being found there in its very essence and genius. It is the self-consciousness of Jesus, therefore, that is determinative of

Christianity, whether in its practical or philosophical aspects, whether it be considered as life in the lives of men, or as doctrines in men's minds.

(a) *Christianity as Life.* To him who will embody this life in his own life, the study and contemplation of the consciousness of Jesus is indeed a vital matter. How else should that consciousness become the guide to his own life? This is what is done inevitably by him who has the practical aim of reproducing in so far as he may in his own life the life of Christ. He does not indeed do this consciously. He studies the sayings of Jesus and seeks to obey his commands. He contemplates the character of Jesus, and seeks to imitate it. He notes the actions of Jesus and seeks to make them the example of his own. But in so far as this is done, to that extent it is the contemplation and the coming to an understanding of the consciousness of Jesus. And in these days when there is so much questioning concerning the facts of Jesus' life, the importance of the study, viewed from its practical aspects, is at once seen. Men need this for their life. If it be true, they wish it for their truth. If, on the other hand, it be not true, or if there be great doubt in their minds as to its truth, they hesitate to take it as the truth. Let it be known and felt, however, as fact, and it may be taken into the life without reserve as truth, subject in the results of its workings only to the limitations of the life into which it is received. If the fact be true, what is needed most in these days, is not only the knowledge that it be true, as objective fact, but also the conviction that it is the truth for the individual, personal life. If Christianity be life then the source of that life must be known as the life of that life. Known not merely as that from which originated certain sayings and deeds, but as the life of which these sayings and deeds served as the medium of expression. Whether Jesus be indeed the Christ; whether he be, as has been conceived, the perfect revelation of God in man; whether he be, within the bounds of time and space the eternal truth and life and love; whether—in the terms of the problem—his self-consciousness be complete in its content and in this content perfect in its relations, or whether it be incomplete, imperfect—this is of vital practical import.

(b) *Christianity as Doctrine.* Or, on the other hand, if Christianity be doctrine, then the philosophical bearing of the fact is of central importance. For this fact must be at the center of its philosophy. Its philosophy is, indeed, essentially this—the interpretation of the fact. Christianity has never been without its theology, at first in germ, but growing all the time and coming into consciousness of itself, now in one of its phases, now in another, as in the exigencies of life and in the stress of thought it developed its various distinctive doctrines.

There are two main questions of intrinsic interest regarding the life of any individual. The first is, Who was he? the second, What did he do? The second is, indeed, often a method of arriving at the first. He was the one who did so and so, or such and such a thing. The second question is itself an element in the first. The fundamental question must always be, Who was he? and in the full answer to this there must necessarily be included the statement of what he did. What he did helps us to determine who and what manner of man he was. The individual himself is always more and greater than what he does. His actions inhere in his person and are expressions of his own nature and character. These as they are the two questions concerning the life of every individual are the two questions that confront the student of the life of Christ. It is only when we recognize the problem of the self-consciousness of Jesus as the fundamental problem that these questions can receive their answer. The question as to what he did becomes merged in the former question as to who he was. For what he did must first have existed in his own thought and life as ideal, motive, purpose. What he did will therefore help to interpret who he was.

These two questions, which are the two questions of his life, and for their answer take us to his own self-consciousness, are indeed the two questions that have always been uppermost in the thought of the church. Its two great doctrines have been the answer to these questions. For three centuries the church was seeking its answer to the former of these questions. When system after system had given its answer, and when each had been rejected as belonging to a philosophy that was alien to Christian-

ity, the church finally forged in the stress of conflict and in the keenest intellectual activity it has ever known, its doctrine of the Trinity. And here the answer rested and has rested to the present day, save as in the present century attempts have been made to interpret the same answer in terms of current thought. "This is the doctrine," declares the church, "that represents what we hold to be our life. This answers the question, who was Jesus. This is the interpretation of our conception of his person. This is our most sacred truth, for it is this that guards the very vitals of our faith. The heart of Christ is in this doctrine. We rest in this. Here our minds have found what our hearts have felt and known. In this the deepest conception of thought are embodied those truths that are the deepest of the heart. As we value our Christianity as a religion of heart and soul for daily life and conduct, so we value this truth. As with this life we meet the dangers to this life from the various forms of life that are foreign to it, so with this truth, this doctrine, we meet those forms of thought that are hostile to it and that represent other types of life than that we cherish. In our heart we know our Christianity as life; in this doctrine we know it in our minds as truth." There could have been no rest for the church until it had found in thought that which was the adequate interpretation and representation of what it already possessed in life. Its doctrine of the Trinity enabled it to meet both friend and foe in the conscious possession of the truth. It had become conscious of itself in the terms and in the conceptions of universal thought, and felt that its life had justified itself before the bar of universal reason. It had answered to the best of its ability the question who Christ was, and had interpreted, in the only way in which it was possible for it to interpret, that truth which it knew immediately, by vital experience, in its own heart.

Take the other question—What did Christ do? This, too, had been before the church from the very first, and although its answers have been many and have varied through the centuries according to that phase of thought which was characteristic of the time, and although even now the church gives no uniform answer in which all agree, yet the question still is before it, and

always some answer is attempted. Though there be various theories of the atonement, yet the *fact* is always insisted on as being the answer to the question—What did Christ do? It may be that the answer to the second question is waiting till the answer to the first be anew investigated. It may be that the answer shall be found in some suggestions that may come when the first theme, so rich and fertile in ideas, is again considered. Indeed, as we have seen above, there is an essential relationship existing between the two questions; and hence, also, between their answers. This essential relation existing between the two doctrines of the atonement and the Trinity, will, then, be better understood with that better understanding of the latter doctrine that cannot be far distant.

This is not the place to discuss the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement. It is important, however, to note in passing the bearing on these questions of the problem of the self-consciousness of Jesus, and to note that the two great doctrines of the church, those that have interpreted most deeply its deepest life, and round which the thought of the Christian ages has loved to dwell, are simply the attempted answers to these fundamental questions—Who was Jesus? and, What did Jesus do?

The ultimate answer to these questions can be found only in the renewed study of the life of Jesus. Christian thought must go below the text to the life. The church must fathom the depths of Christ's own consciousness. It is not sufficient to base a doctrine on isolated texts, or on any number of texts outwardly related. The solution of the problem does not lie here—on the surface, though that surface does reveal depths of truth. The depths themselves must be known, and explored, and fathomed. The truths themselves, not in their surface expression, but in their inner reality, and in their inter-relation in the organic unity of a life, must be known. This is the ultimate source of Christian truth, and until this source be thoroughly known, not only will Christian doctrine be inadequate as the interpretation of the Christian life, but it will fail to coördinate itself with truth as discovered and known in other realms of life. And hence there will be conflict instead of harmony, and Christianity will be

forced back into itself, to discover itself anew, in order that it may know itself aright and come forth with its true interpretation. There is no conflict between truth and truth, but only between truth and error. Error will fall away; truth will remain. That which is truth as life to the consciousness of Jesus, will in the realm of thought be truth as doctrine. Between truth in life and truth in doctrine there is a perfect correlation; and that which is truth in Christian life and doctrine will be truth in all life and thought, and will coördinate itself as such with all that is truth in other realms. There is no division in truth. All truth is one. And that which is found as truth in the deepest source of truth known to science or philosophy, will be found to be the center of all truth, correlating itself with all truth immediately and deeply.

The problem of the self-consciousness of Jesus is thus of vital importance to theology. A searching investigation of this problem will result not only in a more evident foundation for Christian doctrine, a more evident essential relation between Christian doctrine and Christian life, but also in a fuller knowledge of the facts, and so, because of this, in a more harmonious and complete system of Christian truth. A knowledge of the truth in life will be the means to a knowledge of the truth in doctrine. The true life will be the basis for the true theology.

Leaving the historical and scientific aspects of the problem and its bearings within the sphere of Christianity itself on the individual religious life and on theological thought, there remain to be considered, last of all, and briefly, its bearings on the comparative study of religions.

5. *Bearing of the Problem on the Comparative Study of Religions.*

The fundamental importance of this problem has recently been illustrated in a most striking way. For the first time in history there has been convened a Parliament of Religions. Each of the great religions has had its characteristic features sketched by one or more of its adherents. The unity underlying all religions has been dwelt upon. The common possession of the idea of God and of the spirit of human brotherhood have been emphasized. The Parliament cannot fail to bring into promi-

nence and into public interest, the questions—What have Christianity and the other religions in common? and what are those characteristics of Christianity that distinguish it from all others? Take for example, Buddhism. In no other religion is there a spirit so akin to that of Christianity. No founder of any of the great world religions is so near to Christ in sympathy as Gautama. In the record of no other life are we so impressed with the fact that we are in the presence of one whose spirit of human love and of self-sacrifice make him kin to Christ. Yet with all the sweetness and feeling of human brotherhood that we find in Buddhism, with all its noble precepts and its inspiring example of self-sacrifice in the person of Gautama, Buddhism is essentially pessimistic. It cannot escape from that conception of God and of the universe and of humanity out of which it rose, and in which it developed,—a conception that has stimulated the development of the most radical pessimistic systems of the present day. According to the philosophy in which it had its roots, the highest goal of the individual is a state in which the individual personality is lost in the impersonal infinite. The purpose of Buddhist ethics is escape from the burden of existence. Where is Buddhism to be best studied if not in the person of its founder? Where can the genius of Buddhism be so well understood as in the life of him who discovered in his own experience the way of escape, and renounced all to teach this way to others?

It is in the religious consciousness of the founders of the great religions that we can best study these religions, or at any rate that we must ultimately study them, if we are to arrive at their true inwardness and place upon them their true comparative value. It is a question not of conceptions merely, but of life. We are not studying conceptions and their inter-relation in thought, but life in its actual reality. Here is the true center for the ultimate solution of many questions, not only merely religious and ethical but also speculative. What is true in life, must be true in thought. If we can only see life in the organic unity of its component parts, we have before us in reality that which the mind is to know in thought. What are the great religious problems? Do they not center round these three things: the idea of God;

the conception of righteousness ; the idea of immortality? Granted that there be a life that is a perfect embodiment of the conception of righteousness, that is conscious of its own immortality as a personal being, that is a perfect revelation of God in humanity, where can we discover the relations of these concepts so well as in the living life, in which they exist as actualities? The matter then would not be in the realm of speculation merely, but in the realm of reality. It must be that the true relations of these, as seen in life, would throw light upon the true relations as existing in thought, indeed would be the true relations for thought. The problem would be, given the unity of these in life, what is their relation in thought? Whatever realization or near approach to realization of these conceptions in life there may have been, we surely are most likely to find the realization, if at all, in the lives of the founders of the great religions. It is from their own consciousness that these religions sprung, and in these that they had their fullest vital expression. And if there be no perfect realization of any one of them in any life, it yet remains true that the lives in which there was the nearest approach to this, would be of the greatest significance to the student of the respective religions. What, for example, is the Buddhistic conception of God? Look for it in its essential elements in the life of Gautama. What of immortality? what of righteousness? For though there may have been developments in Buddhist doctrine, since the days of Gautama, yet the essential elements of that religion, as they have existed in men's lives, and as they do now exist as a basis for doctrine, must be seen most clearly in that life whom millions venerate as the one who showed to them the way of salvation, having first entered therein himself.

It is not within the scope of this paper to make even a brief comparison between Christianity and the other religions of the world, except in so far as is necessary to illustrate the bearings upon their study of the problem of the self-consciousness of Jesus. It may not be amiss, however, to remark, since the whole emphasis of the problem, as it has presented itself in its various aspects, has been on this point of the fact itself, that if Christianity is the ultimate religion and is to become the univer-

sal religion, it is because it witnesses to a fact; because it presents, not primarily a philosophy, but a life, which it holds to meet alike the demands of mind and heart and will. It is more than Confucianism, a system of ethics; more than a speculative system and a noble ideal and example, as Buddhism; more than a pure and lofty monotheism, as Judaism. Christianity proclaims as a fact, realized in the actual history of humanity, the perfect revelation of God in man.

We have thus briefly considered the problem of the self-consciousness of Jesus in its various aspects and bearings, viz.: (1) its historical aspects—its nature in relation to the sources; (2) its scientific aspects—its nature in relation to the mind's knowledge; (3) its religious bearings—in relation to the individual life; (4) its philosophical bearings—in relation to theology; (5) what may be called its ethnic bearings—in relation to the study of comparative religion.

The subject is thus seen to fall under two general divisions according to its internal and external relations respectively, viz.:

I. Aspects of the problem: (1) historical; (2) scientific.

II. Practical bearings of the problem: (1) on Christianity, (*a*) as life, (*b*) as doctrine; (2) on the study of comparative religion.

The problem in its historical and scientific aspects is subordinate to its practical bearings—religious, philosophical, ethnic. That is, the problem exists for its solution, and for the practical results that such solution will have not only on individual life and thought within the sphere of Christianity itself, but also on the religious life and thought of the adherents of the other religions. The Christianity that most simply and most deeply and most adequately represents in its life and interprets in its thought the life of Christ, as this is found most deeply in his own consciousness of himself, will be that which will be most effective in mediating Christ, not only to the adherents of Christianity itself, but also to the adherents of other religions.